

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 4983

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPH A. SANTIAGO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Public health care is one basic need that must be affordable, effective and be made convenient at everyone's beck and call. No less than the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines has enshrined the policy that the "State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them". In Section 11 of Article 13, the Constitution has likewise guaranteed that, "the State shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development which shall endeavor to make essential goods, health and other social services available to all the people at affordable cost".

With the passage of R.A. No. 7160 otherwise known as the Local Government Code of 1991, the management and implementation of public health services were placed into the hands of local governments in the belief that such a move will improve delivery thereof since the local government heads are part of the local community and therefore are presumed to be more knowledgeable about the needs of their constituencies. But what should have been a very practical approach towards dispensing a primary service, turned out to be a nightmare for most Local Government Units (LGU's) not excluding the province of Catanduanes whose revenues are simply not sufficient to meet the required cash flow for the delivery of health services. These perennial budget gaps is further aggravated by the growing insufficiency of the Internal Revenue Allotment for the health sector as provided for in R.A. No. 7160.

Moreover, being situated in the eastern portion of the Bicol Region, the island-province of Catanduanes is isolated from the rest of the provinces in the region thereby making access to and from the place difficult. Travel by sea from the capital town of Virac and other municipalities to the bicol mainland entails at least four (4) to six (6)

hours of uncomfortable journey. And though travel by air is made at least convenient by an hour's reckoning, it nevertheless faces the usual delays and cancellations due to the often turbulent weather. Thus, patients from the province seeking higher medical care and attention to the mainland are still subjected to the agony of travel's travails compounding in effect their ills.

In addition, the province, also famous for being called the "land of the howling winds", is frequented by devastating typhoons and similar harsh weather conditions, not to mention the turbulent surrounding sea currents. These, plus the fact that transport mobility in the province is greatly hampered by bad roads, have also caused the relative isolation of the province's southern towns and northern towns from each other. Needing medical services, patients with extraordinary or complicated cases therefore have to endure and traverse at least 50 to more than 90 kilometers of tortuous and rough roads to reach the provincial hospital in Virac or the better primary hospitals in the south or in the north.

Against these backdrops, health care is remote, inadequate, sometimes unavailable, and costly or beyond the financial capacity of the province's residents, a seemingly irreconcilable dilemma considering the mandates of the Constitution.

A burgeoning population with an increasing demand for medical services should become reason enough for upgrading its hospitals, and being an island, justifies the need for more and quality health services. Hence, the upgrading of the Eastern Bicol Medical Center (EBMC) in Virac, Catanduanes to a tertiary referral hospital which shall be under the direct control, supervision and management of the Department of Health is sincerely urged to address the indispensable need for health care of my fellow Catandunganons.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this Bill is earnestly recommended.


JOSEPH A. SANTIAGO

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**AN ACT UPGRADING THE EASTERN BICOL MEDICAL CENTER (EBMC) IN
VIRAC, CATANDUANES TO A TERTIARY REFERRAL HOSPITAL
ATTACHED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in
Congress assembled,*

SECTION 1. The Eastern Bicol Medical Center in Virac, Catanduanes is hereby upgraded into a tertiary referral hospital.

SECTION 2. The upgrading shall provide the provincial hospital in Virac, Catanduanes with the capability of a tertiary referral hospital without increasing the hospital's bed capacity.

SECTION 3. Upon its upgrading, the Eastern Bicol Medical Center shall be under the direct control, supervision and management of the Department of Health.

SECTION 4. The Secretary of Health shall issue such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the purpose of the Act.

SECTION 5. The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations for the Organizational Adjustment Fund. Thereafter, such sums as may be needed for their continued operation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

Approved.